

ON THE BIRDS OF THE KISHENGANGA VALLEY,  
KASHMIR.

BY

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ITINERARY.

- April 16. Arrived Domel (2,200 ft.) by the Abbottabad route.  
,, 18. Domel to Pateka (2,670 ft.). 15 miles.  
,, 19 to 21. Remained at Pateka.  
,, 22. Pateka to Dhanni (3,200 ft.). 10 miles.  
,, 23. Dhanni to Tithwal (3,487 ft.). 8 miles.  
,, 24. Remained at Tithwal.  
,, 25. Tithwal to Salkalla (4,500 ft.). 17 miles.  
,, 26 and 27. Remained at Salkalla.  
,, 28. Salkalla to Keran (4,990 ft.). 10 miles.  
,, 29 to May 6. Remained at Keran.  
May 7. Keran to Reshna (5,900 ft.). 14 miles.  
,, 8. Reshna to Sharda (6,130 ft.). 13 miles.  
,, 9 and 10. Remained at Sharda.  
,, 11. Sharda to Kel (6,544 ft.). 14 miles.  
,, 12 and 13. Remained at Kel.  
,, 14. Kel to Janwai (6,906 ft.). 15 miles.  
,, 15 and 16. Remained at Janwai.  
,, 17. Janwai to Taobat (7,400 ft.). 14 miles.  
,, 18. Taobat to Badwan (Gurais) (7,900 ft.). 14 miles.  
,, 19. Remained at Badwan.  
,, 20. Badwan to Bagtor (7,700 ft.). 9 miles.  
,, 21 to 29. Remained at Bagtor.  
,, 30. Bagtor to Koragbal (8,400 ft.). 5 miles.  
,, 31. Koragbal over the Razdhainangan Pass (11,586 ft.) to Tragbal,  
and thence to Bandipur and Srinagar on June 1 and 2.

NARRATIVE.

Ornithologically the Kishenganga is little known for the simple reason that the easiest and usual way of exploring Kashmir's many valleys is to go direct to Srinagar to arrange kit, supplies, and transport and to commence explorations thence. The route from Srinagar to Gilgit certainly traverses the extreme upper end of the valley through Gurais, but the stretch of the Kishenganga flowing through that very beautiful district comprises but one twelfth of its length from the junction of the Tilel and Burzil streams to the river's confluence with the Jhelum at Domel.

My wife and I had always longed to see Gurais, so the idea of combining a visit there with a study of the Kishenganga's birds proved an irresistible attraction in spite of a number of disadvantages in the scheme, the main one being that I had to take my leave from April 15 to June 14. This I knew before we started to be, even in normal times, a good month too early for my purpose, but the weather in the first half of April this year was most unusually wet and cold. The result of course was to all

intents and purposes that we were always moving up about three marches behind the snow level. In consequence practically none of the birds which I particularly wished to study and photograph, with the exception of three or four very early breeders, had begun to contemplate nidification. This made it almost impossible to separate residents from migrants and to determine exact breeding limits.

The itinerary given above will I trust give the reader some idea of our travels but it requires amplification.

We arrived at Tret on the evening of April 14 to hear that the Murree-Kohala road was entirely blocked by snow and landslides and certain to remain blocked for some days. The following morning we gloomily retraced our steps to Rawalpindi only to find that the road via Abbottabad was also breached five miles or so from Domel, but feeling that a possible walk of five miles could not be allowed to interfere with our programme, we set off forthwith and reached Garhi Habibullah the same evening. By next morning the road had been cleared, and in consequence we were soon at the Domel Dak bungalow. Alas! a telegram there intimated that servants and supplies coming down from Srinagar were held up indefinitely by further slips near Uri.

To enable a start to be made at the earliest possible moment, I went off to the Thesildar at Muzzaffarabad to arrange transport, either coolies or ponies. Ponies, I was informed, are not to be had in the lower Kishenganga. Mules are used but the Thesildar was not optimistic. The heavy rain had played havoc with the track—it can hardly be called a road—along the Kishenganga, and an important bridge across a side nullah had also been swept away. He arranged to send us 26 coolies which he said could not possibly be expected to turn up before 11 o'clock on the 18th. It being then the 16th, I banked on our kit arriving and fixed up accordingly.

The following morning a worried Zaildar called upon us. His object was apparently to dissuade us from attempting the journey upon which we had set our hearts. I think he was afraid for my wife, but he did not know her determination nor that she is undoubtedly surer of foot than I am. Besides, it is extraordinary what one can accomplish when the only alternative is to go back all the way one has come. There are few routes over the hills out of the Kishenganga Valley and they are almost impracticable until well on into May. According to the Zaildar the path was so awful that we might reach Tithwal, only three marches up the Valley, in a fortnight or three weeks. Actually we were there in less than a week but nevertheless he was right about the state of the track, and after those first three marches we both felt quite competent to take on any goat over ground of its own choosing.

Our kit fortunately turned up on the 17th, so by the following morning everything had been sorted out and repacked into fifty-pound coolie loads in time for the proposed start. The promised coolies did commence to appear roundabout 11 o'clock, but they were a very mixed crew. A good hour and a half was wasted

wrangling over loads and it required a vigilant eye to see that each coolie had anything like a full one, added to which the coolies of these parts carry their loads unroped on their heads or shoulders instead of across their backs in a sensible manner. A string of gurgling camels would have been easier to deal with. It was long after midday before a start could be made.

The dak bungalow compound was seething with migrants. The previous day had seen the trees filled with Grey-headed Flycatchers and Willow-Warblers. The former had passed on but shimmering white streaks of beauty now proclaimed the place alive with Paradise Flycatchers, and just as we started a flock of five or six Black-throated Thrushes arrived, but whether the latter were bound up or down the valley I cannot say.

Birds seen at the beginning of this march were mainly those of the lower levels and plains including Jungle Crows, Common Mynas, White-cheeked Bulbuls, Drongos, Indian Bushchats, and by the river a couple of White-breasted Kingfishers, Himalayan Whistling Thrushes, many Plumbeous and White-capped Redstarts, and to my surprise on a patch of boulders a mile or so beyond Muzzaffarabad a Pied Chat. A second one was seen a little way further on.

A couple of miles or so from Domel the Kishenganga roars from a gorge of thoroughly impressive dimensions, and from there for over thirty miles to Tithwal it can be said with truth that the valley is but a narrow gash in the mountains with a precarious path scratched out on its flank, sometimes high above the seething water; sometimes, but not often, approaching nearer its surface. From Tithwal to Keran the hillsides are perhaps less precipitous; again a gorge to Dudhmial, but inclined to be more often slightly less enclosed from there to Gurais. But throughout its entire length the river has cut a series of deep gorges with occasional fans and flattened spurs where large side streams flow in. Here of course are the villages, usually consisting of but a few houses, the inhabitants of which eke out a precarious existence by terracing every available spot into narrow fields in which they grow maize, corn, and to a lesser extent rice, maize being to all intents and purposes the sole crop from Keran upwards, in spite of the fact that Keran is only 5,000 ft. above sea level. The severity of the zemindar's lot is reflected in their weather-beaten faces and ragged clothing, and certainly in the lower reaches they struck me as being an under-nourished meagre race. The coolies of the lower tracts were a poor lot after the sturdy Kashmiris, and a thirteen-mile march with a fifty-pound load took them all day to accomplish.

At the eighth mile from Domel, at Ghori, the river is spanned by a suspension bridge. As far as this the road, a ledge cut for the most part in the gorge side, was in an execrable condition but by no means impassable. Numerous slips had occurred with abrupt slides straight into the river beneath, and across these a path a foot or so wide had been trodden. The first few were unpleasant to negotiate but there were so many that we quickly got used to them. From Ghori to Pateka the path was on the

left bank and crossed one or two spurs so was not so often abruptly over the river.

From Ghori too the country began to show a definite change. Bushes had certainly become more numerous and taller, but now open woods of long-leafed pines began to make their appearance on the southern bank, though these were mainly high up the mountain sides. It was not until the next march that the woods definitely grew down to the river's edge.

At Pateka I at once noticed Striated Swallows flying around the forest rest-house. We also heard Nightjars there but I failed to collect a specimen. They had the extraordinary habit of hawking insects at dusk high overhead well out of gunshot over the two stoney nullahs on either side of the hut. I failed to discover them in their daytime haunts and a nighttime expedition with an electric torch likewise drew blank.

From Pateka to Dhanni, a distance of but ten miles, took us all day, three coolies not getting in until nearly dark. First we had to negotiate a rushing torrent where the bridge had been destroyed, and shortly afterwards we were faced with a slip between three and four hundred yards wide where the whole hillside had literally fallen away. It was not as terrifyingly steep as it might have been, but rocks juttred out awkwardly in the worst places and slipping shale splinters made it necessary to go quickly for yards at a time, an unpleasant proceeding where the 'path' was but a series of imprints of coolies' naked feet. Our difficulties were further increased by our two dogs who would insist on trying to walk side by side. The cocker in one place developed cold feet and made an effort to get back along the path to his mistress past those who were leading.

At Dhanni Striated Swallows were again in plenty, so I did not add to the only specimen I had collected at Pateka, expecting to meet with them further on when building operations had commenced. Alas! we saw no more after entering the Tithwal gorge. 3,200 ft. seemed to be the limit of this race. I also ascertained that the Common Swallow was unknown in the valley. The Zaildar at Pateka was able to describe quite accurately the nesting of the Striated Swallow and told me they would have eggs in twenty days' time but said no Swallows ever built in the houses, and certainly I never saw one after leaving Domel.

Dhanni to Tithwal was an easy march, the latter half being through a very beautiful gorge. There were now a few trees on the right bank as well as scrub, and deodars with their graceful drooping boughs and symmetrical outlines made their appearance amongst the pines. Wild pear in blossom and some kind of fig tree also added their quota to the flora. Flocks of Blue Rock-Pigeons inhabited the craggy banks, and I was surprised to see a Large Cormorant wing its way swiftly down stream.

Tithwal, apparently usually called Karnah, was hot; the high hills enclosing it on all sides reflected the sun's rays as in a funnel, and we were pleased to quit it after a day's halt. There was an isolated colony of Common Mynas there and also a few House-Sparrows. No more of either were seen throughout the

length and breadth of the valley until we again found the Sparrows in Gurais. It was here also that the last Paradise Flycatchers were noted, a single pair amongst some almond trees and one at Mirpur but a few miles further on.

At the entrance to the Tithwal Gorge I had an amusing hour or so trying to collect specimens of Alpine Swifts. They had their quarters in some crevices in a perpendicular cliff about forty yards above the path. A screaming band would literally hurtle past the crevices, one or two birds swinging upwards and rapidly creeping into a crack whence issued further chitterings. I regret to say that I expended ten cartridges without the least effect. The bands arrived over a little spur with such incredible speed that an aimed shot was an impossibility. I tried standing with the gun to my shoulder aiming at a favourite crack until I could stand the strain no longer when of course with a swish like a passing shell half a dozen birds would rush by. Browning being ineffective I attempted to get birds as they crawled into one of the narrow cracks. Twice I succeeded in peppering one, but each time it just seemed to shake itself and crawl in the faster. The range was too great for No. 10 shot and dust from the .410 bore. I returned in the evening with 6's but alas they had already retired for the night.

The next stage was a long one, approximately 17 miles to Salkalla. We arrived tired and thereby chose just about the worst camping ground we could have done. Next day we wondered how on earth we could have hit upon such a sandy spot when within two hundred yards was a comparatively grassy patch under a chenar quite close to the spring whence we drew our water.

Incidentally in three weeks we used the tents for as many days, so at Keran sent them back to Srinagar over the 10,000 ft. Pass which leads to Tregam and Sopor. Not only are there frequent forest rest-houses at convenient intervals all through except at Kel and at Taobat, but to find camping grounds anywhere along the whole length of the valley until one is nearly in Gurais is almost an impossibility. Where a flat space large enough to pitch a tent does occur, it is either incredibly dirty, having been well fouled by successive pack-mule caravans, or else it has been turned into a narrow field and consequently is either bearing a crop or in process of being ploughed up. I advise travellers to obtain permission to use the forest rest-houses—most of them have two rooms with just sufficient furniture—take one small tent for use in case of necessity and their own camp furniture. The use of each room is only eight annas a day, so not only does one save coolies, who are not always easy to collect in the lower reaches, but one saves considerable expense into the bargain.

A further change was coming over the birds. The zwang-zwang-zwang of Stewart's Bunting faded out somewhere in the neighbourhood of Salkalla and the Meadow Bunting took its place. Blue Magpies became common, Black Bulbuls excessively so, and Turtle Doves appeared. Scaly-bellied Green Woodpeckers were by no means uncommon. In fact one had reached a new zone of bird life. Salkalla is only 4,500 ft. above sea level but its bird



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Entrance to the Tithwal Gorge. Alpine Swifts occupied crevices in the cliff  
face near the small bridge on the right,



population appeared to correspond with about the 6,000 ft. level of such valleys as the Sind and Lidar off the main vale of Kashmir.

At Keran we stayed a week. We were overtaking the snow level which was then only three marches ahead. Keran itself had experienced a late fall on April 14 but it also appeared a good place for birds. The woods were thicker—deodar, long-leaved pine, horse chestnut and other trees on both sides of the river, and the Ilex growth scantier. The latter, which had been much in evidence from below Salkalla soon after disappeared altogether. There are also two big villages and a considerable crop area as a stream flows into the main river on each side. Chukar abounded on one slope. The Blue Magpie parties were breaking up into pairs: Pied Woodpeckers appeared, and altogether we had an interesting time.

Alas! few birds except Whistling Thrushes, Plumbeous Redstarts, and Brown Dippers, whose photographs I already have in plenty, had really got down to nesting, so bird photography was still at a discount, but the list of species noted soon swelled to the neighbourhood of ninety. The first Crested Black Tit and the first Simla Black Tit were noted, while Short-billed Minivets in large bands were most numerous. Pipits I still did not meet. In fact I had only seen one in the neighbourhood of Dhanni when I was without my gun.

The stretch from Keran to Sharda we did in two instead of the usual three marches, but the 14 miles to Reshna is better done in two stages, halting at Doarian where there is another F.R.H. Doarian to Reshna is decidedly hard going, the path having to ascend through the forest some hundreds of feet to surmount the towering cliffs of a narrow rocky gorge.

At Sharda I heard Thrushes singing a few hundred feet above the rest-house. They turned out to be Grey-headed Thrushes and were mating. I also saw here a Blue-headed Rock-Thrush for the first time and a Missel Thrush. The forest was thoroughly suitable for the Grey-headed Thrushes. Many chestnut trees, just unfolding their leaves, were growing amongst towering forest giants of deodars and silver and spruce firs, numbers of whose rotting trunks were strewn over the steep hillsides collecting drifts of melting snow against their slippery decaying sides. A thin, as yet leafless, parrottia scrub formed the undergrowth.

By the time we reached Kel on May 11, a further change had come about. The deodars had almost disappeared and the firs predominated, though long-leaved pines were again common. Unfortunately these close-growing fir forests which now persisted for the rest of our trek to Gurais contained little undergrowth, so a great many birds which prefer woods of a more mixed character were absent or rare. Wide snow drifts across every nullah and stream slowed up one's rate of march. On the south bank snow was still lying in the forest, and here I heard and saw the first and last Yellow-billed Choughs. 6,500 ft. is surely a very low altitude for these birds even in early May.

We had thoroughly bad luck at Kel, the one and only stage where no forest hut of any kind exists. Shortly after our arrival



the temporary bridge over the Barai nullah, within three hundred yards of which we had pitched a tent on the roof of a deserted hut, was swept away, and we were let in for an enforced stay of three days. I regret now I did not climb the hill immediately behind our camp as I believe a good view of Nanga Parbat, but thirty-five miles away, is to be obtained from its summit.

Fortunately for us the lambardar of Kel was an enterprising soul and nobly turned out a stout band of villagers who, with the help of men from a small hamlet on the other side, threw a primitive cantilever pine-log bridge across a narrows. Unfortunately it entailed a detour of two miles up the nullah and an appalling scramble over snow shoots and the steepest of slopes before we were back on the path. Nevertheless we shall remember the lambardar of Kel with real gratitude.

Our troubles as regards the path were now practically over. We still had a few tricky places to get across—one where a snow bridge had collapsed and we had to descend the stream between deep snow walls splashed by the iciest of waterfalls and crawl under the overhanging lip along the river edge, a by no means pleasant experience, and I for one heaved a sigh of relief when the last coolie was through, as a block of snow the size of a house looked ready to crack off at any moment.

We spent two full days at Janwai and then made for Taobat. Between Kel and Janwai the forest on both sides of the river was amazingly thick, but now, six or seven miles short of Taobat, the valley at last really did open out. The slopes still went up straight from the river but at a gentler angle. Villages and cultivation were more in evidence: one could actually see hilltops and margs. The fall of the river was less and the din of churned up seething mud-stained water diminished. It frequently widened out enclosing a few islands and at last the querulous twitterings of Sandpipers were frequently heard. I had seen but one or two of these birds all the way up and had come to the erroneous conclusion that the Kishenganga was not to be counted as one of their best loved routes from the plains. It was now, and only now, that we fully realised the extraordinary nature of the valley we had traversed. For 120 miles we had walked through fear-some gorges until we expected nothing else. At last we were in country more like that to be found in the better known valleys of Kashmir.

After a somewhat draughty and chilly night at Taobat as our shelter consisted of a large one-roomed hut with wooden barred openings on opposite sides for windows, a 'kuth' store, we went on to Gurais.

The river here takes a wide double bend between heights of 13,000 ft. or so and passing along this bend we could not help feeling that we were in a milder more hospitable clime. This seemed to be definitely true as I began to note again birds which we had left behind at considerably lower levels. At Bagtor Rufous-backed Shrikes re-appeared and at Gurais itself House-Sparrows outnumbered Cinnamon Tree-Sparrows by twenty to one, while Sandpipers became increasingly numerous.



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View near Kel. From here the fir forest became increasingly thick.

R. S. P. Bates.



But we were not impressed with Gurais. True the snow had hardly melted: flowers were practically non-existent, and the weather broke. Perhaps we had been expecting too much, but we had undoubtedly passed through much finer scenery. After a day's rest we therefore retraced our steps to the Bagtor F.R.H. two miles below Kunzalwan, charmingly situated on the edge of the forest on a sloping green marg still soaked with but recently melted snow, where bright blue gentians already starred the earth, and where irises were soon to cover the sward in wide patches. There we spent a thoroughly pleasant ten days from May 21 to May 30.

Migrants were still arriving. One day I suddenly realised that Sooty Flycatchers were about, hawking flies from the highest perches to which they would return again and again, while three days before we left I thought I heard a Blue Chat, soon confirmed as next day two were calling and thereafter they were everywhere.

On May 30 we left on the final stage to cross the Razdhainangan Pass and descend into the vale of Kashmir. There is little more to add. As we left Koragbal I heard the unmistakable five-noted call of the Large-billed Willow-Warbler and went on hearing it until we left the vicinity of the stream near Gorai. The pass was very trying. In spite of getting up at 4 a.m. in a sharp frost the snow was very soft and through it we had perforce to plod and slip and sink for nearly six miles before leaving it behind for good at the top of the Tragbal forest. A biting wind was blowing in our faces as we neared the crest and our toes were like blocks of ice but it was a perfect day and the views in all directions more perfect still.

As we trudged down the Tragbal forest I received ample confirmation of the rigour of the Kishenganga's climate compared with that of the vale of Kashmir and its immediate side valleys. Birds were much more numerous, the Meadow Buntings and many other birds obviously breeding freely, and below Tragbal the wild roses were glorious with many Hume's Lesser White-throats breeding amongst them. Nevertheless I soon ascertained that conditions really were abnormal everywhere, as after arrival in Srinagar my efforts to get at least a few photos of the water birds of the Dal Lake were quite abortive as the water was very deep and the birds I wanted only just commencing to build. As the Kishenganga from its very topography and climate is bound to be backward compared with the vale of Kashmir, it is not surprising therefore that I had found so few nests.

#### NOTES.

The following condensed notes may be of use to others taking the same route:—

(1) Kashmir always experiences rainy weather in the first half of April. In a valley of the character of the Kishenganga, this is bound to result in frequent landslides rendering the path unfit for anything except lightly laden coolies.

(2) Repairs to the path are only considered after the better weather has set in and the snow melted in the upper reaches, and take considerable time to effect.

(3) From approximately Sharda the danger from avalanches and landslips is not over even in normal times until well on into May. Thus

(4) one cannot count on being able to use animal transport until the beginning of June.

- (5) The forests of the valley are divided into three divisions:
- (a) Muzzaffarabad Division,
  - (b) Keran Division, and
  - (c) Sindh Division.

In order to use the forest rest-houses permission must be obtained from the respective Divisional Forest Officers whose offices are at Muzzaffarabad, Keran, and Bandipur.

(6) These F.R.H.'s have furniture, including bathroom utensils, with the exception of Janwai F.R.H. which had nothing.

(7) There are no F.R.H.s at Kel and Taobat, but at the latter place is a large one-roomed shed which may be used. There is of course no cook-house or servants' quarter along with it. The Bagtor F.R.H. is  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles further on but this makes it a twenty-mile march from Janwai—not impossible of course provided the path has been repaired and one can use ponies as the going is good except over one or two short stretches.

(7) Tentage may be used in place of going to the rest-houses but places to pitch them are difficult to find until after Janwai, the only available ground often being in the F.R.H. compounds.

(8) Milk, eggs, chickens, and sheep are obtainable. Butter is not good and the sheep are miserably thin as the grass is of scant growth until June. Vegetables are quite unprocurable with the exception of dandelion leaves which make quite presentable spinach.

(9) The time of year to undertake the trip is rather difficult to advise upon, as the lower end of the valley warms up very quickly. Even on April 24 we found Tithwal decidedly hot. But if one starts too early one overtakes the melting snows and finds the path frequently blocked or damaged. Personally I would advise starting in the first week of May and moving up more slowly than we did.

(10) Should one wish to strike into the valley instead of starting from Domel, there are three good passes leading from Kamraj or the Lolab to Tithwal, Keran, and Dudhnial. These are not likely to be practicable for ponies until well on into May or even early June.

#### SYSTEMATIC LIST.

(1) *Corvus macrorhynchus intermedius*.—Jungle Crows were common all along the line of march and were noted to be building in April; namely at Dhanni on April 22, near Tithwal carrying lining material on April 23, and at Salkalla on April 27.

(2) *Corvus splendens*.—House-Crows were totally absent from the valley. Villages like Tithwal and Keran might have been expected to harbour colonies of this crow but the last I saw were near Abbottabad in Hazara.

(3) *Corvus monedula*.—This bird also has really no place here as it was never met with. A pair were however seen not far from Garhi Habibullah in Hazara shortly before crossing over into the Kishenganga Valley.

(4) *Urocissa flavirostris cucullata*.—These beautiful birds were very commonly met with in the lower parts of the valley, the last, a party of three, being seen a couple of miles beyond Dudhnial at an elevation of approximately 6,000 ft. on May 8. More often than not they were in small flocks but single pairs were not infrequently met with. For instance, we had two pairs near us at Keran occupying territory on either side of the Rest-House. Stuart Baker, *F.B.I.*, 2nd Edition, vol. i, remarks that they haunt principally evergreen forests and heavy jungle. I would rather put it that they haunt the outskirts of evergreen forest and heavy jungle, seldom if ever being found far within the latter, unless well provided with glades dotted with trees and tall bushes. They often visit cultivation where it lies close to forest, and I have not infrequently seen them hopping about ploughed fields in a most ungainly manner.

(5) *Garrulus lanceolatus*.—On April 26 I procured a female which flew across a small patch of cultivation into some light mixed forest by the river side at Salkalla. The ovary was slightly developed, having a granular appearance. A pair was seen in similar country three miles from Salkalla on April 28 during the march to Keran.

(6) *Nucifraga multipunctata*.—A single bird was seen at Keran on April 30 on the edge of the forest by the F.R.H.

(7) *Pyrrhocorax graculus*.—A party consisting of some thirty birds was seen on May 12 at Kel. Taking advantage of the air currents they circled rapidly up a rather bare steep nullah behind our camp and were soon lost to view. None was seen elsewhere, not even during our crossing of the Razdhainangan Pass.

(8) *Parus major cashmirensis*.—Very common as far as Sharda after which they became progressively scarcer until the last one was seen and shot on May 17 five miles beyond Janwai at an elevation of 7,200 ft. At Keran at the beginning of May they appeared mostly to be concerned with searching for nesting sites, but the specimen procured near Janwai proved to be a breeding male.

(9) *Parus monticolus monticolus*.—A single pair was remarked at Keran on May 3 in some mixed forest about 300 ft. above the F.R.H. They were not uncommon at Sharda.

(10) *Lophophanes melanolophus*.—First noted in the Keran Forest at 5,300 ft. on May 1. Thereafter it was met with at each halt to Bagtor. The next species, however, seemed to be the common Black Tit of the Kishenganga.

(11) *Lophophanes rufonuchalis rufonuchalis*.—Also first seen at Keran, on May 5, where it was undoubtedly more numerous than *melanolophus*. It was in fact the commonest Tit seen from there right up to Gurais, and most of the Black Tits on which I levelled my glasses turned out to be of this species. A pair was watched inspecting holes in the ground for a nesting site in the forest on the edge of the path near Kunzalwan on May 18. I am quite convinced that numbers of 'Black Tits' nests taken from holes in the ground in the forests of the Kashmir valleys and recorded as *melanolophus* are in reality those of *rufonuchalis* and that the bird is much commoner throughout Kashmir than it is recorded to be. I am sure that I have unfortunately been guilty of the error myself. The two birds are not very easy to differentiate except at the closest range with glasses.

(12) *Sitta leucopsis*.—Marching back to Bagtor from Badwan on May 20, I heard a very harsh call issuing from the summit of a tall spruce fir. Two birds of the size and shape of Nuthatches flew out and across the path into the thick forest on our left. Judging from their notes I consider they must have been of this species. They were the only Nuthatches seen throughout the valley.

(13) *Trochalopteron lineatum lineatum*.—Evidently a common bird throughout the valley wherever ground suited to its requirements occurs. Although an arrant skulker it does not mind leaving cover if undisturbed. A pair haunted the compound of the F.R.H. at Tithwal although it could boast of but three bushes capable of affording any protection from view. Near Sharda I saw one out in the middle of a ploughed field, while at Bagtor one was actually noted sitting on the roof of a house. It only shuffled away when I approached and levelled the glasses in its direction. They possess a very plaintive unmistakable three-noted danger call of 'twee-twee-twee'. Two males shot at Pateka on April 20, which I had taken for a paired couple, had the testes enlarged to the size of peas but a search for a nest only produced a last year's one.

(14) *Microscelis psaroides psaroides*.—From Muzzaffarabad, where I saw a pair in the trees of a cemetery just before getting into the gorge, to Keran (5,000 ft.) these birds became increasingly common. I saw a pair at Reshna (5,900 ft.), 13 miles further on, but none after that, although I thought I heard their harsh notes once at Sharda but may have been mistaken.

(15) *Molpastes leucogenys leucogenys*.—Common as far as Tithwal. I noted one or two at Salkalla (4,500 ft.) but none beyond.

(16) *Certhia himalayana limes*.—The first Tree Creeper was noted at Pateka on April 24. This bird, a female, was not in breeding trim. Others were seen at Keran, Janwai, Bagtor, and Badwan. At Bagtor they were very numerous. A male shot at Janwai on May 16 had the testes greatly enlarged. Hodgson's Tree-Creeper was not noted.

(17) *Troglodytes troglodytes neglectus*.—I did not come across this cheerful little songster until I had climbed to about the 8,500 ft. level into a rocky rather gloomy patch of forest in the Gishat nullah at Bagtor on May 24. I heard them again after passing Gorai on the way up to the Razdhainangan.

(18) *Cinclus pallasii tenuirostris*.—Exceedingly common along the river, and its side streams, over its whole length. Young birds strong on the wing were seen from Pateka in April to Badwan and Bagtor at the end of May. One bird was observed sitting, presumably on eggs, in an inaccessible nest at Tithwal on April 24. Although undoubtedly an exceedingly early breeder, the nesting of this bird is very prolonged, to a certain extent depending on elevation. I have seen young ones in the nest at between eight and nine thousand feet in the Lidar Valley as late as August.

(19) *Tarsiger brnneea*.—This bird only put in its first appearance on May 28 when I recorded that I thought I heard its notes once in the Gishat nullah at Bagtor. I had ample confirmation next day when I heard two at once on either side of the F.R.H. Thereafter they became increasingly numerous.

(20) *Saxicola caprata bicolor*.—Not uncommon at Domel and seen again at Pateka between April 18 and 21.

(21) *Saxicola torquata indica*.—Common throughout the valley. Signs of breeding were noted from the end of the first week in May.

(22) *Rhodophila ferrea ferrea*.—Common at both Domel and Pateka. None seen further up the valley.

(23) *Ananthe picata*.—On April 18 I saw one of these birds on a stony patch just opposite the old fort at Muzzaffarabad and another one a little further on, likewise amongst stones and boulders.

(24) *Enicurus maculatus maculatus*.—Noted at Keran and Sharda on May 1 and 10 respectively. From their behaviour I am sure the Keran pair had a nest but I failed to locate it. This bird is probably much commoner in the Kishenganga than it appeared to be but I visited few streams suitable to its habits, except at Bagtor, where, however, I never came across it.

(25) *Microcichla scouleri scouleri*.—Generally connected with mountain torrents in the steepest of nullahs well provided with waterfalls where this little bird can play about in the spray. At the Gehl nullah between Tithwal and Salkalla

on April 25, one was seen right underneath a voluminous fall and another in a typical situation at Janwai on May 14, but two miles beyond Dudhnial, where the river for once flows serenely between wide banks, I was surprised to see a Little Forktail pottering around a boulder some ten yards out from the near bank. We did not pass a side stream for another quarter of a mile. This was choked with snow and had very little water in it.

(26) *Phoenicurus frontalis*.—One was noted in Gurais on May 19 feeding in a patch of viburnum near Wampur village.

(27) *Chaimarrornis leucocephala*.—Common everywhere along the main river and also to be seen on the larger streams. In my opinion the majority of these Redstarts breed late, from the end of June, and move up very leisurely from the lower winter levels to their breeding grounds in the neighbourhood of eight or nine thousand feet upwards. A male, shot at Bagtor on May 23, had the testes greatly enlarged and appeared to be breeding.

(28) *Rhyacornis fuliginosa fuliginosa*.—As common along the whole length of the Kishenganga as along the other Kashmir rivers. I noted no signs of nest building until we were at Keran at the end of April. From the beginning of May many pairs had commenced nidification, and at Bagtor on May 27, the only time I really searched for them, I found nests both being built and containing fresh eggs.

(29) *Calliope pectoralis pectoralis*.—The first one seen was feeding in some viburnum bushes twenty yards from the Bagtor F.R.H. on May 29. It was a male with organs developing and may have been driven down from higher levels by the stormy weather we had experienced on that and the two previous days. The next one I saw was sitting unconcernedly on a stone by the broken bridge near the remains of the Gorai dak bungalow.

(30) *Ianthia cyanura pallidiora*.—First noticed near Badwan on May 20, but on our return to Bagtor I found them very common there, often coming out into the viburnum shrubs running along the edge of the forest. On May 21 I shot what I thought was a female, only to find it was a male in immature plumage with testes well enlarged. A second one in full plumage shot the next day appeared to be hardly contemplating breeding.

(31) *Copsychus saularis saularis*.—As usual there was a pair in the Domel dak bungalow compound, and I saw one by the roadside as we passed through Muzaffarabad.

(32) *Turdus bouboul*.—A dark unicoloured Thrush with an orange bill, which I took to be a female of this species, was seen quietly feeding on the ground in a small bagh three miles from Pateka on April 22.

(33) *Turdus rubrocanus rubrocanus*.—Only met with at Sharda, May 8 to 10, although a fine song heard near Gorai at 9,000 ft. on our way to the Razdhainangan Pass on May 31 was attributed to this species, as well as a number of old nests on the edge of the fir forest at Bagtor. At Sharda it was common above the rest-house and a male shot there had its testes greatly enlarged. They appeared to be mating as no less than five were seen at once chasing one another about the wood to an accompaniment of much cackling. As already stated the forest here was most suitable for them. After Sharda it was composed mostly of silver fir and spruce and was very thick and lacking in undergrowth.

(34) *Turdus atrogularis*.—A party of these Thrushes flew into the tall trees in the Domel dak bungalow compound just as we were preparing to leave on April 18.

(35) *Turdus unicolor*.—Only noted at Keran where I shot a male with greatly enlarged testes out of a pair which flew over the F.R.H. on May 3. Another bird was seen on the Nilam plateau near Keran two days later.

(36) *Arceuthornis viscivorus bonapartei*.—One seen at Sharda on May 9 and another at Janwai on May 16.

(37) *Monticola cinclorhyncha*.—First recorded at Sharda where I saw a male on May 10 when watching the Grey-headed Thrushes. I heard the song on



several occasions during the remaining marches to Gurais and found them to be fairly common at Bagtor. I spent two whole days towards the latter end of May looking for their nests but without success. The pleasant though rather monotonous song of the male, so often rendered from the very pinnacle of a pine or fir tree, renders this bird easily traceable.

(38) *Myophaus caeruleus temminckii*.—Common everywhere and numbers had nests even from the date of our arrival in Domel, although I think few birds were then at the stage of incubating eggs but merely building. On May 11 between Sharda and Kel I observed three nests on ledges of the steep rock face of the further bank of the river within less than fifty yards of one another. On two of them birds were sitting. The other nest was visited twice. At Janwai there was a nest with three fresh eggs in it on a rafter of the F.R.H. verandah, while at Taobat one had actually built on a beam inside the shed in which we spent the night.

(39) *Prunella strophiate jerdoni*.—A male was singing on a branch just over our heads shortly after we got into the forest at Gorai (9,000 ft.) on May 31. It was obviously breeding, its testes being very greatly enlarged.

(40) *Hemichelidon sibirica gulmergi*.—I only became aware of the presence of these birds after we had been at Bagtor some days, that is on May 25, when I came on quite a party near the mouth of the Shalput nullah. One pair appeared to be building near the end of a branch high up in a fir tree. They have a very characteristic habit of hawking insects from a high perch to which they often return. After the date in question I saw many even around the F.R.H. They were very numerous at Koraghal in some birch trees on the evening of May 30.

(41) *Muscicapula superciliiaris superciliiaris*.—First noted at Salkalla. They were common at Keran where I watched a pair on April 30 fussing around a crack in an old split trunk. Both birds entered the cavity repeatedly although I was but four feet away. They eventually rejected it as a possible nesting site. I saw none beyond Reshna.

(42) *Eumyias thalassima thalassima*.—One pair observed by a small stream on a bush-covered hillside at Pateka on April 20.

(43) *Aleonax ruficaudus*.—I first met with this rather unobtrusive Fly-catcher at Keran. It may occur lower down the valley but until I had shot one I was not conversant with its notes and may have missed it. They were exceedingly common and breeding around Bagtor. Incidentally I found no trace of the occurrence of *latirostris*.

(44) *Culicicapa ceylonensis pallidior*.—The trees of the Dak bungalow compound were full of these flycatchers all through the day of our arrival at Domel, April 16. The following day they had passed on; apparently up the Jhelum valley as only at Keran on April 29 did I hear the unmistakable notes of a single bird.

(45) *Niltava sundara whistleri*.—Seen in the Domel Dak bungalow compound on both April 17 and 18, possibly the same bird both times.

(46) *Tchirea paradisi leucogaster*.—Numbers of these beautiful birds passed through Domel the day after our arrival there, April 17. I don't think I have ever seen so many as I did at Pateka during our three days' halt at that place from April 19 to 21. Nevertheless I only saw one pair at Tithwal (April 24) in some almond trees and a single bird five miles further up at Mirpur, elevation 3,700 ft., on April 25. I quite expected to see them at Keran but none had appeared when we left on May 7. In fact this striking bird seemed to be unknown to villagers I questioned around Keran. Between Dusut and Sharda, 6,130 ft., there are many little orchards of cherry and apple trees as the valley is somewhat wider but this is perhaps a little too high for them to penetrate to.

(47) *Lanius vittatus*.—A single bird attributable to this species was seen at the edge of a small copse between Tithwal and Salkalla at about 4,000 ft. on April 25.



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*Myophonus coeruleus temminckii* on the way to its nest.

R. S. P. Bates.



(48) *Lanius schach erythronotus*.—Common at Pateka. We had a pair in the F.R.H. compound. I then saw them at Keran on the little plateau on which Nilam village stands, the elevation being about 5,400 ft., and shot a breeding male there on May 5. After that none was seen until we were passing through Bagtor where the river makes its abrupt turn into the wider milder Gurais valley. They were not uncommon in Gurais.

(49) *Pericrocotus brevirostris brevirostris*.—Noted immediately on our arrival in Keran where they were commonly seen in flocks of considerable size feeding through the forest often descending into the parrotia scrub. A male shot there on April 29 had the organs only slightly developed. They were common enough right up to Gurais, but from Keran onwards the flocks appeared to be breaking up into pairs.

(50) *Dicrurus macrocercus albirictus*.—Became increasingly common as we approached Keran. At that place a pair near the F.R.H. were most aggressive and may have already been breeding. I have no records of any seen after Keran.

(51) *Sylvia althæa*.—On May 1, I shot the male out of a pair seen in the viburnum and rose bushes on the edge of the Nilam plateau near Keran. Its testes were enlarging. It appeared very suitable ground for them and they may well breed there. I saw them nowhere else.

(52) *Phylloscopus affinis*.—A small party of these diminutive but hardy warblers was noted on passage at Pateka on April 19.

(53) *Acanthopneuste magnirostris*.—The characteristic five-noted call of this Willow-Warbler was not heard until we were leaving Koragbal in the small hours of the morning of May 31. I heard them frequently as far as Gorai where we left the vicinity of the stream. A few days before leaving Bagtor I had noticed that a very plain-coloured Willow-Warbler had appeared in small numbers in the Shalput nullah. This bird, which was then silent, fed largely in low bushes and close to the ground on weedy grass-covered banks along the stream. A specimen, a male with testes enlarging, shot on May 25 in this nullah, turns out to be *magnirostris*.

(54) *Acanthopneuste occipitalis occipitalis*.—Noted commonly throughout the valley. In April in the lower reaches they were probably only on passage. But at Keran in early May I began to hear their plaintive danger call.

The commonest Willow-Warbler of all, especially in the fir forest zone, was a small yellow-rumped bird, almost certainly *Phylloscopus proregulus*. So many Willow-Warblers were only passing through that I shot none of this species intending only to procure specimens actually nesting. I rather suspect that this bird is a late breeder and none seemed to have commenced nidification when we left the valley.

(55) *Homochlamys pallidus pallidus*.—This little bird of the intriguing voice was heard at Pateka, Salkalla, and Keran, in all of which places it appeared to be fairly prevalent. Keran being but five thousand feet above sea level I expected to meet with it much further up the valley, but, although the hillsides on the north bank of the river at Sharda looked ideal for it, I never heard it there. Is its range in the Kishenganga very restricted or did we pass it at Keran moving up the valley even more slowly than we were doing?

(56) *Suya criniger criniger*.—Common at Pateka; heard again near Dhanni, and one seen on a bushy hillside at Keran at about 5,400 ft. A male shot at Pateka on April 19 in the thick bushes just by the F.R.H. showed that breeding was about to commence. Incidentally it seemed to be a well known bird there and had the local name of *phitta*.

(57) *Regulus regulus himalayensis*.—The only one recorded was seen in the fir forest in the Shalput nullah near Bagtor at about 7,600 ft. on May 22. Unfortunately I blew it practically to pieces. Its testes were enormous and very pulpy but I could find no nest.

(58) *Oriolus oriolus kundoo*.—A single bird flew across the river four miles from Pateka during the march to Dhanni on April 22.